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FREEDOM AGENDA

SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA: LACK OF QUORUM IN PARLIAMENT  
STYMIES DISCUSSION OF NEW PRESS LAW

REF: A. KUWAIT 5286

[1](#)B. KUWAIT 5136

[1](#)C. KUWAIT 5083 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)1. (SBU) The last three National Assembly sessions of 2005 epitomized the obstacles to passage of key legislation on the Assembly agenda, such as the revised press law. (Note: The current parliamentary term began on October 17 and ends in July 2006. End note.) During its December 26 session, Parliament was packed for the discussion of a bill recently approved by the Assembly but rejected by the Government to write off the interest on pensioners' loans, just one of many efforts by parliamentarians (MPs) to obtain more Government benefits for their constituents. When MPs failed by one vote to get the two-thirds majority necessary to override the Government's veto, a heated debate broke out and MPs demanded an unconstitutional re-vote. Although there were other important issues on the agenda, the three-hour debate dominated the session. When MPs finally got around to discussing the new press and publications law, the Assembly emptied; no more than nine MPs were present at any one time for the rest of the session. (Note: There are 50 elected MPs and 16 Ministers, who are ex officio MPs. End note.)

[1](#)2. (SBU) The December 27 session was similarly unproductive. The session was delayed twice until enough members arrived - 27 MPs and five Ministers - to achieve quorum (33 MPs). Although the Assembly discussed 27 of the press law's 35 articles, there were not enough MPs present in the hall to vote on any one of the articles. Discussion was scheduled to continue on December 28, but the session was adjourned due to lack of quorum. The National Assembly is scheduled to vote on the articles during its next session on January 23. (Note: The Assembly meets four to five times a month. End note.)

[1](#)3. (SBU) Comment: The lack of quorum for the discussion of the press law demonstrates many parliamentarians' narrow focus on constituent benefits, rather than on broader political and economic reforms, and highlights some of the difficulties in getting key reform legislation passed by the Assembly. End comment.

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